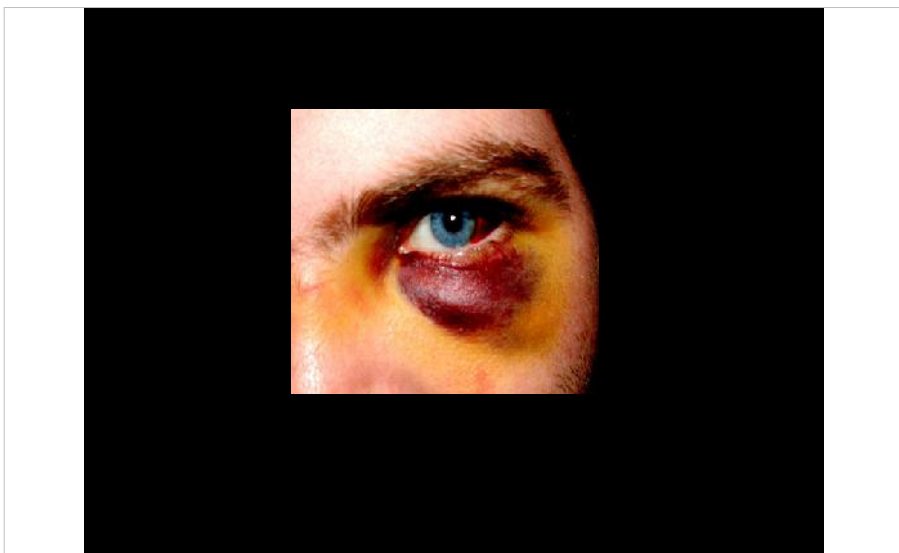


**Slide #
1**

(Wear sunglasses, covering “black eye.”)

How do we push back the push back . . .

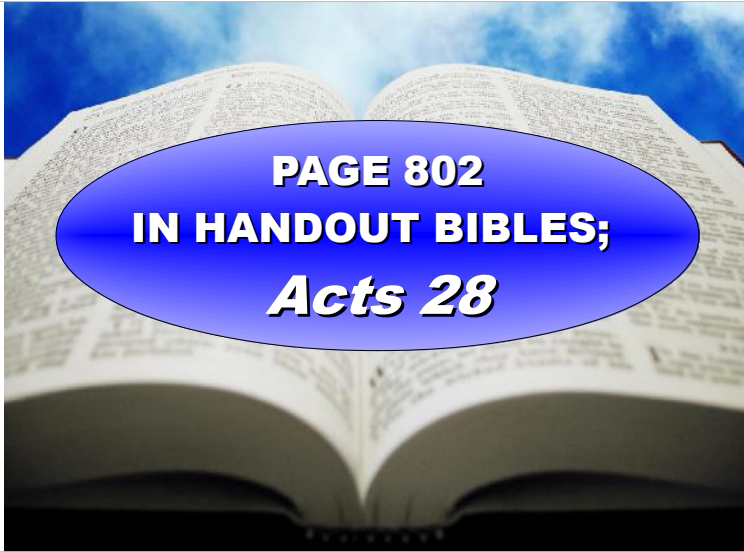


**Slide #
2**

When someone tells us to take off the sunglasses and exposes our black eye?

Today we want to consider how we might push back with gentleness and respect

- not defensiveness**
- not excusing the obvious evidence of violence that's really hard to hide**



**PAGE 802
IN HANDOUT BIBLES;
*Acts 28***

**Slide #
3**

Let's begin by looking at Acts

- seeing that the pattern of judging the truthfulness of religion has often (and usually) been tied to the practical success or failings associated with it.

- positive vs. negative references

Handout Bibles



Slide # 4

Paul has made several defenses of his actions and of the Christian faith, but now he is put on a boat for Rome to have his day before the Emperor.

**Context = winter travel, going to better harbor on Crete, huge storm, God's sovereign protection, chance to share gospel
Now on island.**

Acts 28:3-4 ESV

When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.”

**Slide #
5**

Read text

Bad things as a result = bad person (or bad faith)

Acts 28:5-6

He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

**Slide #
6**

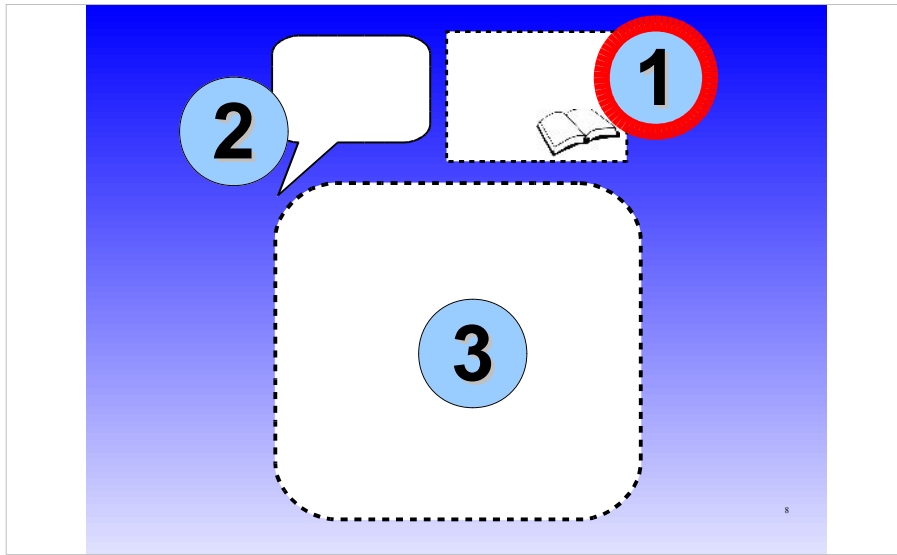
But when good things happen, then must be a good person or a good faith . . .

Acts 28:8-10

It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him. And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.

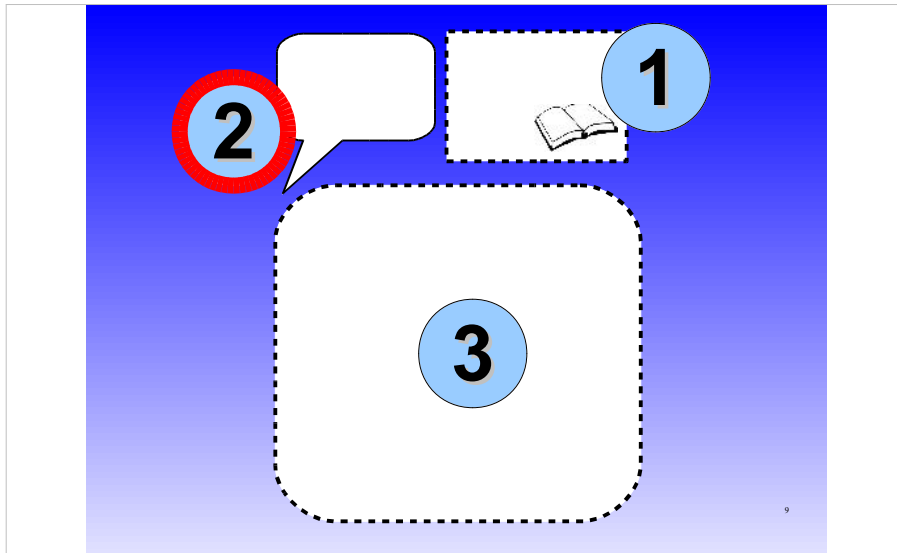
**Slide #
7**

Not that Christianity hasn't historically given evidence of the truthfulness by miracles and healings.



**Slide #
8**

So let's use this text as a statement of what the Bible says . . . God is faithful, whether He gives or if He takes away . . .



**Slide #
9**

But this does introduce the push back many of us have heard at one time or another as we seek to move FTCO . . .

“Christianity seems to always lead to historical 'black eyes.'”

“The church has a history of supporting injustice and destroying culture.”

“How can Christianity be true when so much violence has been done in the name of Christ?”

“I have to doubt any religion that has so many hypocrites.”

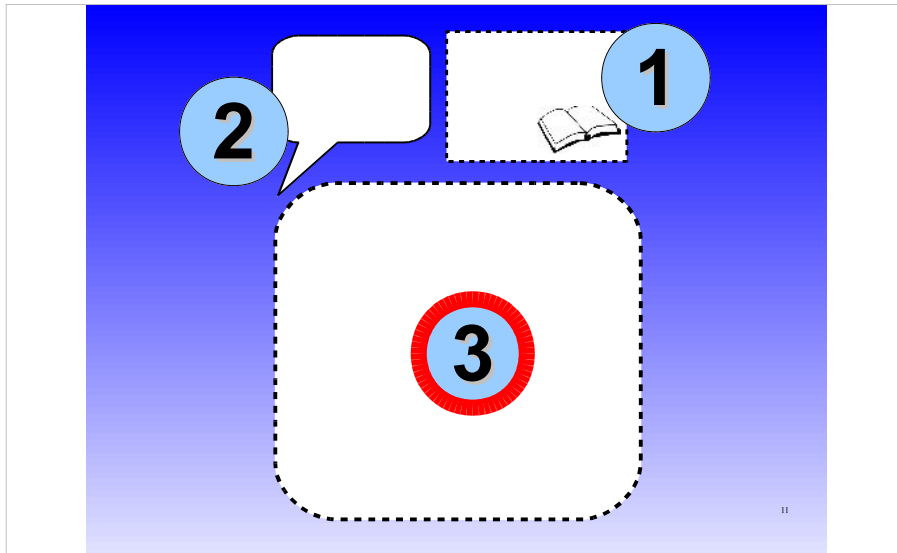
**Slide #
10**

The “black eyes” of Christianity

- often include crusades, inquisition, witch trials . . . but also slavery, oppression, etc.

- (read quotes on slide)

"Science flies you to the Moon, Religion flies you into buildings" (comment by Gordon Duffy at patheos.com)



**Slide #
11**

So how could we pushback the pushback, with gentleness and respect?

When people tell us to take off our sunglasses and expose our black eyes, how should we interact with them?



**Slide #
12**

Cf. last week's 3 levels of push back =

- Facts (accurate information?)**
- Foundations (humble assumptions?)**
- Feelings (honest motivations?)**

Outline doesn't exactly follow this but you will notice how we follow the same pattern from external facts to internal motivations.



**“BLACK EYES” ARE A
HUMAN CONDITION, NOT
JUST A RELIGIOUS OR
CHRISTIAN ONE.**

**Slide #
13**

**First push back = in aspect of checking out
our facts**

**- cf. Statements like, “the most potent
source of human conflict, past and present”
(Sam Harris in D'Souza, p.207)**

**- but can show that there is a human
condition toward violence, certainly not just a
religious one.**



**“BLACK EYES” ARE A
HUMAN CONDITION, NOT
JUST A RELIGIOUS OR
CHRISTIAN ONE.**

*Anti-religious movements have
also produced massive
violence. The issue seems to
be the human tendency to
“transcendentalize” anything to
appear morally superior.*

**Slide #
14**

**Non-religious like: Russian, Chinese,
Cambodian, French Revolution**

**[transcendentalize] = term by Alister McGrath
(when God is gone then replace with
something else as the “highest good.”)**



**“BLACK EYES” ARE A
HUMAN CONDITION, NOT
JUST A RELIGIOUS OR
CHRISTIAN ONE.**

*The tendency of religious people,
however, is to use spiritual and
ethical observance as a lever to
gain power over others and over
God, appeasing him through
ritual and good works.” - T. Keller*

**Slide #
15**

**But that does not mean that Christian's
shouldn't take responsibility . . . we too
exercise the “libido dominandi” (lust to
dominate – D'Souza, p. 225)**

**** who transcendentalize ritual and good
works as a means to control God
--- God is now on our side!***



**“BLACK EYES” ARE A
HUMAN CONDITION, NOT
JUST A RELIGIOUS OR
CHRISTIAN ONE.**

**Slide #
16**

**But greatest push back is the exaggerations
that take place.**

**The Crusades (which were a response to the
Muslim invasion of Europe), Inquisition,
Witch Burnings = at most 200,000; versus in
several decades: Stalin = 20M; Mao = 70M;
Hitler = 10M.**

Quote D'Souza, p 226.

Problem not Christianity but Humanity



**2 (MOST) "BLACK EYES"
ARE JUDGED BY
CHRISTIAN STANDARDS.**

**Slide #
17**

As we push back from facts to foundations of beliefs and assumptions, we need to challenge folks how it is that they are judging the black eyes

- not that we disagree but that they are assuming what is unexamined . . .



**2 (MOST) "BLACK EYES"
ARE JUDGED BY
CHRISTIAN STANDARDS.**

*Jesus strongly critiqued
hypocritical religious people,
such as the Pharisees who
practiced "judgmental
posturing."*

**Slide #
18**

**Again, don't misunderstand the need to judge
the black eyes**

- Jesus certainly reserved His strongest rebukes for the hypocritical religious leaders of His day**
- those guilty of judgmental posturing**



**2 (MOST) "BLACK EYES"
ARE JUDGED BY
CHRISTIAN STANDARDS.**

*Apart from Christian standards
(or the echo of them in our
culture) we would not have a
definitive basis to criticize the
"black eyes" of history.*

**Slide #
19**

**What we are saying is that judging the
crusades or inquisition or witch trials is a
problem when compared to Christian ethics
- but not to many ethics that come from
cultures that transcendentalize honor-shame
and power (self-regarding vs. other-regarding
cultures)**

**Summary: Pushback foundations . . . basis for
morality? Contra billboard in GR . . .**



Slide # 20

It is sponsored by the Center for Inquiry, a "non-profit organization with the mission to foster a secular society based on science, reason, freedom of inquiry, and humanist values," according to a news release. (WoodTV Website)

- lots of harsh words for Christians but . . .



**Slide #
21**

Now that we've admitted to have black eyes, while reminding folks that they should could check their facts (violence is a human condition) and foundations (morality is almost impossible to define in a totally “relative” world) . . .

Now we must help people remember that the Christian faith has manifest great resources (shook off the viper – cf. Paul)

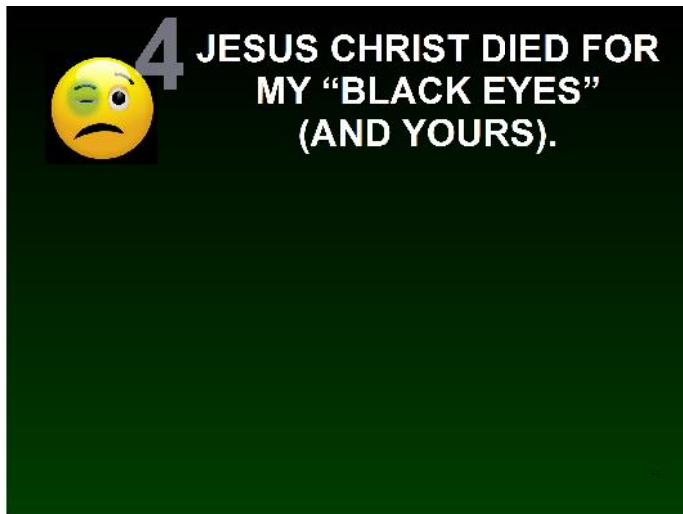


Slide #
22

**Wilberforce = why would the British commit
“voluntary econocide” (Keller, p. 64)**

**Civil Rights = founded in the faith of blacks
who were willing to challenge southern
whites to live like true believers**

**Desmond Tutu in S. Africa; Poland – Carrying
a banner that reads, “We forgive.” (Keller p.
68)**



**Slide #
23**

Yet it is not enough to just show the superiority of Christian resources . . . we have to push back into a person's soul . . . into their "feelings" (motivations) . . . and help them deal with the black eyes that are not just read about in history books . . .

*"It is often the case
that people whose lives
have been harder and
who are 'lower on the
character scale' are more
likely to recognize their
need for God."*

-Timothy Keller

**Slide #
24**

**We're not saying that Christianity and
individual Christian's don't have black eyes**

**Rather, we say that we expect them because
Christian acknowledge their sinfulness and
need for a Savior.**

Trans: As Paul tells the Corinthians . . .

1 Corinthians 1:26-28

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are . . .

**Slide #
25**

We often forget that the Christian faith is most often received among those whose need is obvious . . . like the Corinthian church

And like that church we often forget from whence we came . . .

Trans: text continues . . .

1 Corinthians 1:29-31

. . . so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

**Slide #
26**

God wants us to boast in the Lord, not in ourselves

Compare the relative health of people visiting a museum with those who are in a hospital.

- ONE OF THE REASONS WHY WE SEE SO MANY GLARING CHARACTER FLAWS AMONG PROFESSING CHRISTIANS

**Slide #
27**

The contrast is between the relative health of those in a hospital vs. those visiting a museum (T Keller).

We help a person push back into their own soul when we are not defensive but make ourselves vulnerable . . . admitting our need.

2 Corinthians 3:1-2

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all.

**Slide #
28**

But God does change people

- [redemptive lift]

- cf. Dean Garrison offering to give his testimony . . . my life has changed!

When we push back we eventually push into a person's soul's space . . . to the tender parts of their heart

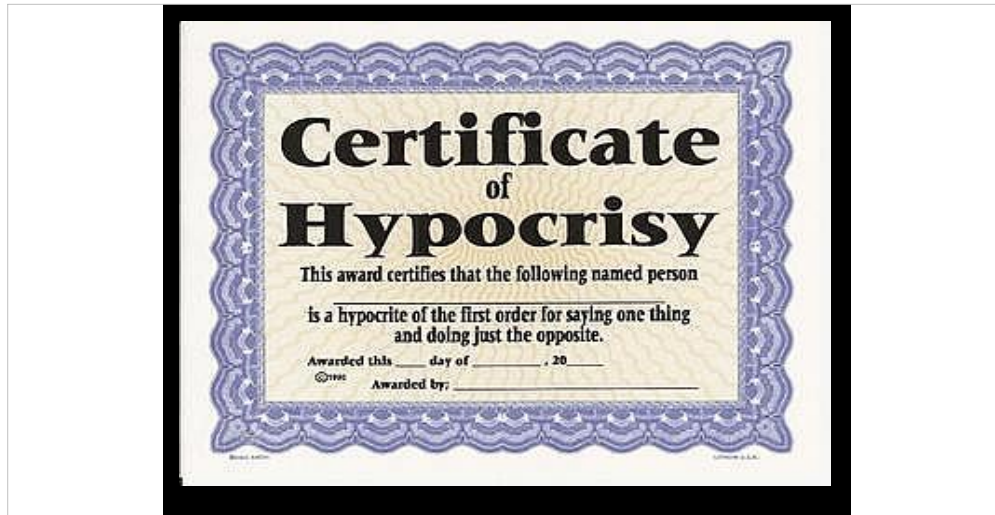


**Slide #
29**

When we push back . . . and push deeper into someone's soul . . . we often find that it is not the “black eyes” of history but of individuals and churches.

- cf. 2 top reasons for not going to church = fighting and hypocrisy.

- cf. My response to my brother's critique of years ago . . . I agree it ought not to be so.



**Slide #
30**

But when I am honest, I too deserve a certificate of hypocrisy.

- I too struggle with doing one thing while I say another.

- cf. My talking with a church dropout . . . issue = hypocrisy (not mine but his!)

So what is the answer . . .

1 Timothy 1:15

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

**Slide #
31**

Is to be one beggar who tells other beggars where to find bread.

Is to be a grateful man who knows he is not what he should be yet, but praises God that he is not who he used to be.